



CHOOSE RESPECT

Respect. Teach Kids How to Give It and Get It.

Choose Respect, a national initiative sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), encourages adolescents to develop healthy, respectful relationships to prevent dating abuse. Choose Respect uses interactive learning tools to illustrate realistic relationship situations, providing youth, ages 11-14, opportunities to find nonviolent alternatives to resolve conflicts. The message – Choose Respect – inspires kids to think about the way they treat others every day in a way that is real, relevant, and personal, creating a lasting connection to improve relationship habits and lifelong patterns of better health.

Developing Healthy Relationships: A Role for Adults

Being an adolescent can be tough. Adolescence is a time when kids learn how to make decisions about relationships with their friends, family, and girlfriends or boyfriends. What they learn now about how to treat others will affect relationships throughout their lifetimes. But kids can not do this by themselves. They need adults – parents, teachers, youth group leaders, others – to help them choose respect.

Did you know that recent studies found that one in four students as young as 8th and 9th grade has experienced some form of dating abuse? Even something as subtle as putting someone down or trying to change how they dress is a danger – especially when it leads to more violent forms of abuse. That is why adults need to talk to kids now, about the importance of developing healthy relationships that allow kids to make their own choices.

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships

People in healthy relationships respect each other. They talk honestly and freely and share in decision-making. They trust and support each other and respect each other's independence. In contrast, an unhealthy relationship is unbalanced. One person may try to control or manipulate the other to get his or her way.

It is never too early to teach or learn about healthy relationships. Developing these skills can help kids interact positively with others and shape the way they handle situations in the future. Here are some skills adults can teach kids to help them develop and maintain healthy relationships:

- **Anger control.** We all get angry, but how we express it can affect our relationships with others. Anger can be handled in healthy ways, such as taking a deep breath, counting to 10, or talking it out.
- **Problem solving.** You can learn to solve problems and identify new solutions by breaking a problem into small parts or talking through the situation.
- **Compromise.** You will not *always* get your way. Acknowledging different points of view is part of learning how to have healthy relationships that produce give-and-take solutions.

- **Fighting fair.** How you argue is important in maintaining healthy relationships. Everyone will argue at some point, but those who are fair, stick to the subject, and avoid insults are more likely to come up with a possible solution.
- **Understanding.** Take a minute to understand what others might be feeling – put yourself in their shoes. It can improve your communication skills and help form healthy relationships.
- **Confidence.** Having confidence in yourself can help your relationships with others. With confidence, you respect others' needs and keep the lines of communication open. It shows that you are calm and comfortable enough to allow others to express their opinions without forcing yours on others to win an argument.
- **Be a role model.** Take every opportunity to show what it means to respect another. Keep the lines of communication open and talk through tough situations. Help others to see where they agree and disagree. This will help everyone know how to choose respect.

Other tools that adults can use to help kids choose respect can be found at www.chooserespect.org.